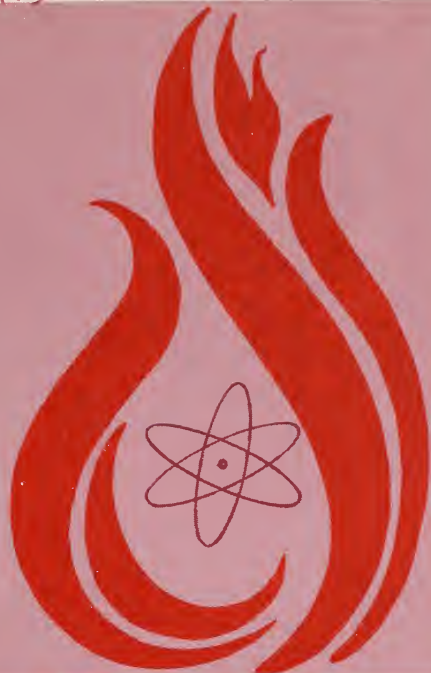


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# RURAL FIRE DEFENSE IN WARTIME

- MISSION
- ORGANIZATION
- COORDINATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE

WASH., D.C.

1945



# WHAT IS RURAL FIRE DEFENSE?

Rural Fire Defense is a National, State, and local program for the prevention and control of fires caused by enemy attack or widespread nuclear accident in rural areas of the United States. This multi-agency program coordinates the forces, equipment, plans, and actions in an orderly fashion to bring about maximum strength for survival and recovery in a nuclear wartime fire disaster.

Rural areas cover more than 90 percent of the land area of the United States—forests, farms, ranges, and small towns. Fires raging uncontrolled through rural America could cause loss of human life as well as widespread destruction of crops, livestock, timber, homes, farms, and countless other resources. Transportation, communication, and power lines would be disrupted, thus reducing the capability to produce essential resources and distribute them to areas of greatest need.

The objective of the Rural Fire Defense program is to keep fire damage to less than that which would seriously interfere with National defense. In meeting this objective, the program emphasizes:

1. The need to insure public health and safety,
2. The importance of all rural resources, especially human and animal life,
3. The need to safeguard essential agricultural field crops and forest products, and
4. Rural fire protection for resources and facilities vital to National security and recovery.

It is vital that Rural Fire Defense activities continue to be coordinated with related functions of other Federal and State agencies and with the total defense effort of USDA. The following sections describe the fundamental Rural Fire Defense organization, particularly the arrangements for interagency coordination. Also discussed briefly are the USDA State and County Defense Boards and their interrelationships with the National Rural Fire Defense organization.

## WHO MANAGES RURAL FIRE DEFENSE?

Emergency preparedness functions have been assigned to the Secretary of Agriculture by an Executive Order. These functions include the prevention and control of fires resulting from enemy attack in rural areas of the United States.

The Secretary has delegated responsibility for the Rural Fire Defense function to the Chief of the Forest Service, who activates it in nuclear emergencies. He also works closely with and is assisted by representatives of other Federal and State organizations through a system of fire defense committees.

### National Rural Fire Defense Committee

The National Rural Fire Defense Committee is an advisory group to the Chief of the Forest Service in the preemergency period. This Committee provides interagency coordination and advice in Rural Fire Defense planning at the National level. It gives leadership and direction to the total Rural Fire Defense program, and is composed of representatives of the **Federal Extension Service, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Interior, and Association of State Foresters.** The Committee prepares and maintains a National Rural Fire Defense Plan which provides:

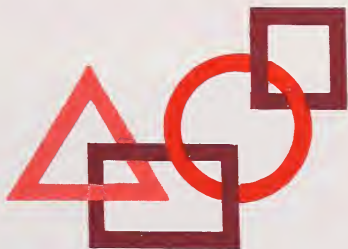
- Guides for Rural Fire Defense in defense emergency and attack situations,
- An operating plan and instructions for the National Rural Fire Defense Operating Group, and
- Information for coordinating groups and agencies to acquaint them with Rural Fire Defense.



## National Rural Fire Defense Operating Group

The National Rural Fire Defense Committee becomes the National Rural Fire Defense Operating Group in an actual wartime emergency. This National group will:

- Provide technical management direction and damage assessment capability.
- Give advice on coordination, priority, use, and control of life-sustaining resources, channels of authority, and operational procedures.
- Help to fulfill unforeseen suppression needs and handle special fire control functions.
- Aid in resolving National-level problems of a legal, financial, or logistical nature, especially those which involve National priorities and allocations in a declared emergency.



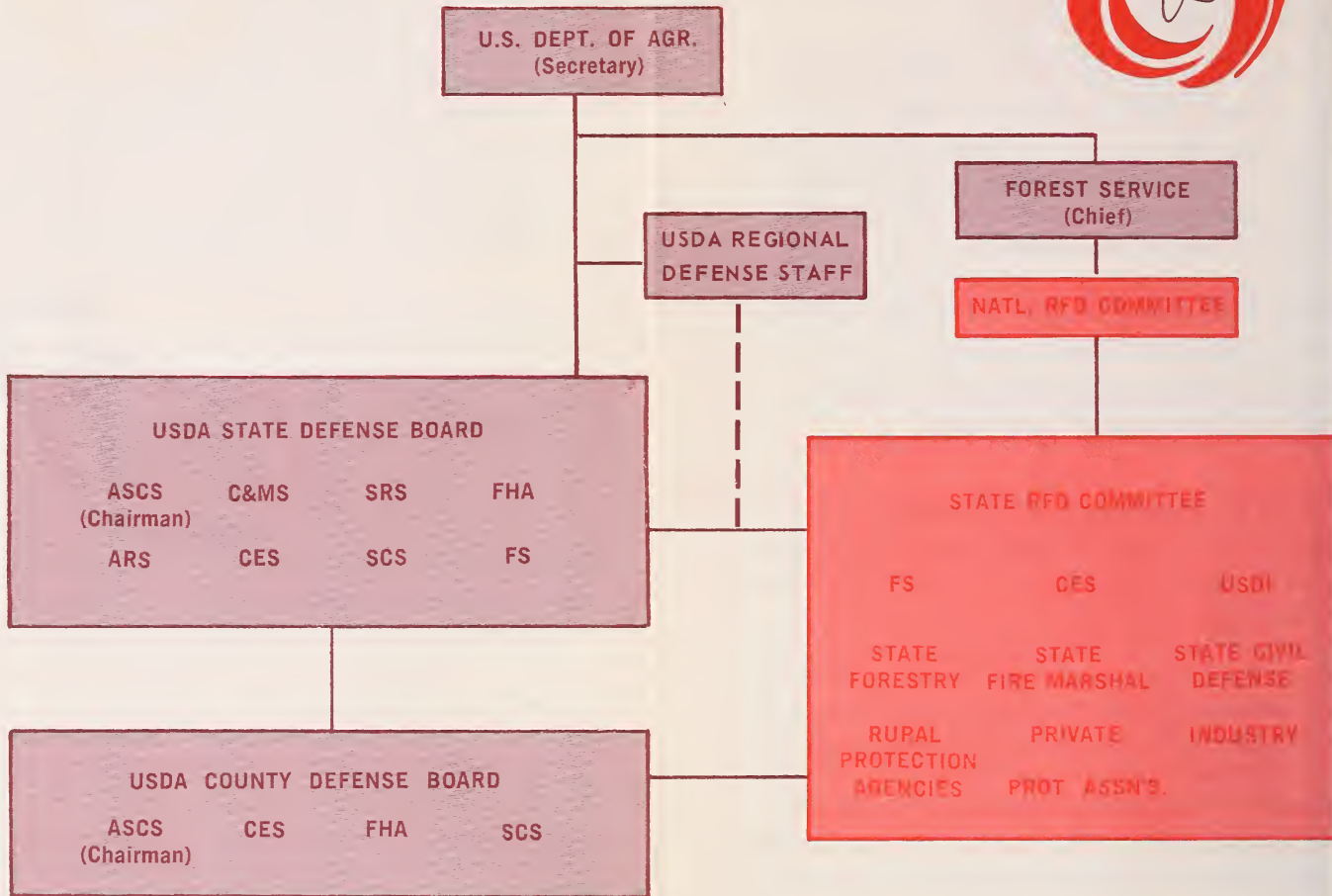
## State Rural Fire Defense Committee

The State Rural Fire Defense Committee consists of representatives from wildlife protection agencies and cooperators in each State. Its make-up may include representatives from the **Forest Service, Cooperative Extension Service, Department of Interior, State Forestry, State Fire Marshal, State Civil Defense, rural protection agencies, private fire protection associations, and industry.** The Committee selects its own Chairman with the State Forester or other State officials **generally** serving in this capacity. The primary purpose of the Committee is to:

- Develop Rural Fire Defense Plans in the State to provide for coordinated action in attack situations.
- Promote understanding and acceptance of Rural Fire Defense as an integral part of State Civil Defense.



# RURAL FIRE DEFENSE ORGANIZATION



## Note:

In a defense emergency, the USDA STATE DEFENSE BOARD functions with all the authority of the Secretary of Agriculture, if communications are cut.

Red shaded area becomes the National and State RFD Operating Group in a defense emergency who, in turn, maintain contact with the USDA STATE DEFENSE BOARD Chairman. If he cannot be reached, they should seek direct contact with the USDA Regional Defense Staff.





## State Rural Fire Defense Operating Group

The State Rural Fire Defense Operating Group replaces the State Rural Fire Defense Committee when a defense emergency occurs. Close cooperation will be maintained with the State Civil Defense Fire Coordinator of the Office of Civil Defense. Separate directors of urban and rural firefighting forces may be used in some States in lieu of a single fire coordinator.

Each rural fire agency will provide fire protection for rural lands under its jurisdiction, according to their value in terms of human life and life-sustaining items, as determined by the Rural Fire Defense Operating Group. The Forest Service will coordinate and support as fully as possible all rural fire defense activities.

## RELATIONSHIPS OF STATE RURAL FIRE COMMITTEES AND OPERATING GROUPS TO USDA STATE DEFENSE BOARDS

### USDA State Defense Boards

There is a USDA State Defense Board in each State, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia.

The USDA State Defense Board is comprised of representatives from **Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service** (Board Chairman), **Agricultural Research Service**, **Consumer and Marketing Service**, **Cooperative Extension Service**, **Farmers Home Administration**, **Forest Service**, **Soil Conservation Service**, and **Statistical Reporting Service**. The primary responsibility of each State Board is to coordinate the entire USDA fire defense effort within each State. (The Forest Service representative on each State Defense Board is currently informed on Statewide emergency planning progress and acts as liaison with other fire support agencies.)

In case of a strategic or tactical alert, Forest Service personnel assigned to the USDA State Defense Board will proceed to the USDA Emergency State Office. The Board, in turn, acting



through and with the USDA State Defense Board Chairman, will establish lines of communication with fire field headquarters of the Forest Service, State, and other fire control organizations. The State Rural Fire Defense Operating Group usually operates at an emergency site. In some States, this site is the same as that of the State Civil Defense organization.

## **Preemergency Relationships**

In the preemergency period it is essential that USDA State Defense Boards and State Rural Fire Defense Committees work as a team with mutual understanding of one another's mission, plans, and emergency responsibilities. The Forest Service representatives on the USDA State Defense Boards, and the State Rural Fire Defense Committees are required to keep each other informed on situations involving protection of rural resources, fire suppression needs, and requirements for the claimancy items which may develop during postattack.

## **Emergency Relationships**

If an emergency should occur, the same cooperation must exist between USDA State Defense Boards and the Rural Fire Defense Operating Groups. State Defense Boards will render full support and assistance to the Operating Groups, as they pursue their Rural Fire Defense objectives.



Boards at all levels—National, State, and county—have standby authority to allocate food and other life-sustaining resources and will serve as a Federal claimancy channel through which fire suppression needs (labor, fuels, tools, vehicles, etc.) will be dispatched if unavailable elsewhere.

## RELATIONSHIPS OF THE FOREST SERVICE TO USDA COUNTY DEFENSE BOARDS

### USDA County Defense Boards

Each county or comparable subdivision of the United States and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands has an organized USDA County Defense Board, or in some cases, a USDA Metropolitan Area Defense Board in heavily populated metropolitan areas where increased food management aspects are greater. Usually the Board includes a representative from each of the following agencies:

- **Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Board Chairman**
- **Cooperative Extension Service**
- **Farmers Home Administration**
- **Soil Conservation Service**

Where local needs warrant and if personnel are available, there is representation from the Agricultural Research Service and, as noted above, from the Forest Service. The Consumer and Marketing Service also provides a representative on USDA County Defense Boards in heavily populated urban areas because of the increased food management operations.

## Preemergency Relationships

A Forest Service representative is designated to the USDA County Defense Board in all counties where Forest Service offices or lands are located. In many counties where Forest Service has no direct protection responsibilities and its personnel are not located close by, representatives of the State protection organization (usually the State Foresters) meet with, inform, and advise the USDA County Defense Board as needed.

## Emergency Relationships

In an emergency, the Forest Service or its State Fire Control representative would maintain liaison with USDA County Defense Board representatives to keep them informed of the current fire situation and to recommend action to strengthen and maintain fire control capability at the local level. County Defense Boards would provide all possible assistance to local firefighting groups including assistance in obtaining necessary equipment and other fire suppression needs.



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## THE TASK AHEAD

In support of Rural Fire Defense, there are some jobs immediately ahead for USDA State and County Defense Boards, Rural Fire Defense Committees, firefighters, and the general public. These are to:

- Orient, inform, and train willing citizens on a planned and timely program basis according to analyzed needs.
- Complete and maintain disaster plans. These will outline who does what and when in a wartime emergency situation, and what to do when outside assistance or resources are needed under wartime authority.
- Support the most practical and modernized civil defense program.
- Encourage interest in achieving maximum fall-out shelter protection to the fullest extent possible with available resources. First in priority is human survival and all life-sustaining items, i.e., food and water, livestock, feed, and seed.
- Expand radiological monitoring capability to the fullest limit possible on a volunteer basis. Following an attack, monitoring is the first essential requirement needed to insure safe activity of any kind.

A concentrated effort on the part of each working group to recognize its individual role and interrelated responsibilities with other groups in times of war and peace will contribute significantly toward the protection and preservation of our American rural life.

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